

Disney Conservation Biologist Earns Prestigious Nomination

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., Nov. 14, 2011 – Dr. Anne Savage, Ph.D, has made significant strides in studying 1-pound primates and 7-ton pachyderms. Now, her efforts to blend education and conservation with innovative programs have earned her a nomination for the Indianapolis Prize, the most prestigious award for animal conservation.

"I am so deeply honored to be nominated for the prize and in the company of amazing conservationists who are leaders in helping to protect some of the world's most endangered wildlife," said Savage, senior conservation biologist at Walt Disney World Resort. "Having the contribution of my life's work recognized by my peers is truly a humbling experience."

Savage's impressive body of work includes helping add cotton-top tamarins, tiny primates with long tails found in a remote area of northwest Colombia, to the endangered primate list. Sometimes called the "punk rock primates" of the world because of their wild manes of white hair that outline their black faces, cotton-top tamarins now have protections mandated from the federal government and cannot be hunted or captured.

The Indianapolis Prize nomination committee also called out Savage's work in establishing Aug. 15 as the "Day of the Cotton-Top," now a national holiday in Colombia, and creating the eco-mochila program in Los Limites. This effort employs more than 300 local Colombian women who crochet plastic bags into traditional tote bags, helping rid local forests of plastic-bag litter.

During her career, Savage has also helped identify and document two new elephant vocalizations... the "rev" which is short in duration and usually followed by a rumble, and the "croak" which is generally given when the trunk is used to manipulate an object. Savage has also studied the nesting cycles and migratory patterns of endangered sea turtles and helped develop a successful breeding program for the critically endangered Key Largo Woodrats.

No matter what the animal, Savage's goal is always to increase awareness, interest and protection of the animals by engaging the public in fun activities to extend her conservation work.

"I'm just so thankful that I get to spend each and every day working to protect endangered species and helping others to realize that everyone ...and anyone can truly make a difference for wildlife," Savage said. "All you need is passion, dedication and the will to make it happen."

Six finalists of the Indianapolis Prize will be announced next spring and a winner will be selected in mid-2012.